

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for distributing customer contacts to a transaction processing entity of a transaction processing system, such method comprising:  
determining a media type for a customer contact in the transaction processing system;  
finding a transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type;  
and  
routing the customer contact to a transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein determining a media type further comprises determining a source of the customer contact.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein the source is an access channel comprising at least one of a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web and video.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein the media type further comprises a priority level specifying the order in which the customer contacts are to be processed by the transaction processing entity.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein the media type further comprises a parameter to specify exclusivity.
6. The method of claim 1 wherein the transaction processing entity comprises at least one of an agent, an agent station, a console, a terminal, and an interactive voice response unit.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein finding a transaction processing entity further comprises:

finding a transaction processing entity that is not handling an exclusive media type;

determining a metric of how many customer contacts of the media type have been assigned to the transaction processing entity; and

comparing the metric to a threshold relating to the maximum number of customer contacts of the media type that the transaction processing entity may handle, and when the metric exceeds the threshold, preferentially routing customer contacts to another transaction processing entity.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein finding a transaction processing entity further comprises searching a transaction routing table for a transaction processing entity that is processing a nonexclusive media type.

9. The method of claim 1 further comprising using a transaction routing table to list assigned customer contacts to transaction processing entities.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the transaction routing table is updated once a customer contact has been routed to the transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein routing the customer contact further comprises connecting the customer contact to the transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type.

12. The method of claim 11 wherein connecting is performed by a matrix switch of an automatic call distributor.

13. A method for distributing customer contacts to a transaction processing entity of a transaction processing system, such method comprising:

determining a media type for a customer contact in the transaction processing system;

searching the transaction routing table for a transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type;

determining a metric of how many customer contacts of the media type have been assigned to the transaction processing entity;

comparing the metric to a threshold relating to the maximum number of customer contacts of the media type that the transaction processing entity may handle, and when the metric exceeds the threshold, preferentially routing customer contacts to other transaction processing entities; and

routing the customer contact to the transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein the capable transaction processing entity comprises an agent station that is equipped with the necessary hardware to handle the media type.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein necessary hardware comprises interfaces to a Internet, cable television, radio, satellite, and a telephone system.

16. The method of claim 13 wherein determining a media type further comprises determining a source of the customer contact.

17. The method of claim 17 wherein the source is an access channel comprising at least one of a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web and video.

18. The method of claim 13 wherein the transaction processing entity comprises at least one of an agent, an agent station, a console, a terminal, and an interactive voice response unit.

19. The method of claim 13 further comprising using a transaction routing table to list assigned customer contacts to transaction processing entities.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein the transaction routing table is updated once a customer contact has been routed to the transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type.

21. A method for distributing customer contacts to a transaction processing entity of a transaction processing system, such method comprising:

determining a media type for a customer contact in the transaction processing system;

searching a transaction routing table for a transaction processing entity that is processing a nonexclusive media type;

searching the transaction routing table for a transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type;

determining a metric of how many customer contacts of the media type have been assigned to the transaction processing entity;

comparing the metric to a threshold relating to the maximum number of customer contacts of the media type that the transaction processing entity may handle, and when the metric exceeds the threshold, preferentially routing customer contacts to other transaction processing entities; and

routing the customer contact to the transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type.

22. A system for distributing customer contacts to a transaction processing entity of a transaction processing system comprising:

means for determining a media type for a customer contact in the transaction processing system;

means for finding a transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type; and

means for routing the customer contact to a transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type.

23. The system of claim 22 wherein the means for determining a media type further comprises means for determining a source of the customer contact.

24. The system of claim 23 wherein the source is an access channel comprising at least one of a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web and video.

25. The system of claim 22 wherein the media type further comprises a priority level specifying the order in which the customer contacts are to be processed by the transaction processing entity.

26. The system of claim 22 wherein the media type further comprises a parameter to specify exclusivity.

27. The system of claim 22 wherein the transaction processing entity comprises at least one of an agent, an agent station, a console, a terminal, and an interactive voice response unit.

28. The system of claim 22 wherein the means for finding a transaction processing entity further comprises:

means for finding a transaction processing entity that is not handling an exclusive media type;

means for determining a metric of how many customer contacts of the media type have been assigned to the transaction processing entity; and

means for comparing the metric to a threshold relating to the maximum number of customer contacts of the media type that the transaction processing entity may handle, and when the metric exceeds the threshold, preferentially routing customer contacts to another transaction processing entity.

29. The system of claim 28 wherein the means for finding a transaction processing entity further comprises means for searching a transaction routing table for a transaction processing entity that is processing a nonexclusive media type.

30. The system of claim 22 further comprising a transaction routing table to list assigned customer contacts to transaction processing entities.

31. The system of claim 30 further comprising means for updating the transaction routing table once a customer contact has been routed to the transaction entity that is capable of handling the media type.

32. The system of claim 22 further comprising means for connecting the customer contact to the transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type.

33. The system of claim 32 wherein the means for connecting comprises a matrix switch of an automatic call distributor.

34. A system for distributing customer contacts to transaction processing entities of a transaction processing system comprising:

- a customer contact analyzer to determine a media type for the customer contact;
- a searcher that finds a suitable transaction processing entity of the transaction processing system that is capable of handling the determined media type; and
- a router that connects the customer contact to the suitable transaction processing entity.

35. The system of claim 34 wherein the customer contact analyzer comprises a computer that associates an access channel with the customer contact.

36. The system of claim 35 wherein the access channel comprises at least one of a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web and video.

37. The system of claim 34 wherein the transaction processing entity comprises at least one of an agent, an agent station, a console, a terminal, and an interactive voice response unit.

38. The system of claim 34 wherein the router comprises a matrix switch of an automatic call distributor.

39. The system of claim 34 further comprising a transaction routing table of customer contacts and transaction processing entities.